

## Contrary Passages?

Sabbath Afternoon, November 19

A correct understanding of “what saith the Scriptures” in regard to the state of the dead is essential for this time. God’s Word declares that the dead know not anything, their hatred and love have alike perished. We must come to the sure word of prophecy for our authority. Unless we are intelligent in the Scriptures, may we not, when this mighty miracle-working power of Satan is manifested in our world, be deceived and call it the workings of God; for the Word of God declares that, if it were possible, the very elect should be deceived. Unless we are rooted and grounded in the truth, we shall be swept away by Satan’s delusive snares. We must cling to our Bibles. If Satan can make you believe that there are things in the Word of God that are not inspired, he will then be prepared to ensnare your soul. We shall have no assurance, no certainty, at the very time we need to know what is truth.

—*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, December 18, 1888.*

Every species of delusion is now being brought in. The plainest truths of God’s Word are covered with a mass of man-made theories. Deadly errors are presented as the truth to which all must bow. The simplicity of true godliness is buried beneath tradition.

The doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul is one error with which the enemy is deceiving man. This error is well-nigh universal.

This is one of the lies forged in the synagogue of the enemy, one of the poisonous drafts of Babylon. “All nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”

—*Evangelism, p. 247.*

The question of the non-immortality of the soul also needs to be treated with great care, lest in introducing the subject there be started a deep and exciting controversy, which will close the door to further investigation of the truth.

Great wisdom is required in dealing with human minds, even in giving a reason of the hope that is within us. . . . What is the hope of which we are to give a reason?—the hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ. . . .

. . . You dwell too much upon special ideas and doctrines, and the heart of the unbeliever is not softened. To try to impress him is like striking upon cold iron. . . .

. . . We are in constant need of wisdom to know when to speak and when to keep silent. But there is always perfect safety in talking of the hope of eternal life. And when the heart is all melted and subdued by the love of Jesus, the inquiry will be, “Lord, what must I do to be saved?”

—*Letter 12, 1890.*

Sunday, November 20

## The Rich Man and Lazarus

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Christ shows that in this life men decide their eternal destiny. During probationary time the grace of God is offered to every soul. But if men waste their opportunities in self-pleasing, they cut themselves off from everlasting life. No afterprobation will be granted them. By their own choice they have fixed an impassable gulf between them and their God.

This parable draws a contrast between the rich who have not made God their dependence, and the poor who have made God their dependence. Christ shows that the time is coming when the position of the two classes will be reversed. Those who are poor in this world's goods, yet who trust in God and are patient in suffering, will one day be exalted above those who now hold the highest positions the world can give but who have not surrendered their life to God.

—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 260.

In this parable Christ was meeting the people on their own ground. The doctrine of a conscious state of existence between death and the resurrection was held by many of those who were listening to Christ's words. The Saviour knew of their ideas, and He framed His parable so as to inculcate important truths through these preconceived opinions. He held up before His hearers a mirror wherein they might see themselves in their true relation to God. He used the prevailing opinion to convey the idea He wished to make prominent to all—that no man is valued for his possessions; for all he has belongs to him only as lent by the Lord. A misuse of these gifts will place him below the poorest and most afflicted man who loves God and trusts in Him.

—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 263.

The closing scenes of this earth's history are portrayed in the closing of the rich man's history. The rich man claimed to be a son of Abraham, but he was separated from Abraham by an impassable gulf—a character wrongly developed. Abraham served God, following His word in faith and obedience. But the rich man was unmindful of God and of the needs of suffering humanity. The great gulf fixed between him and Abraham was the gulf of disobedience. . . .

When the voice of God awakes the dead, he will come from the grave with the same appetites and passions, the same likes and dislikes, that he cherished when living. God works no miracle to re-create a man who would not be re-created when he was granted every opportunity and provided with every facility. . . .

To learn of Christ means to receive His grace, which is His character. But those who do not appreciate and utilize the precious opportunities and sacred influences granted them on earth, are not fitted to take part in the pure devotion of heaven.

—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 269–271.

Monday, November 21

## “ ‘Today . . . With Me in Paradise’ ”

As He hangs upon the cross, there floats up to Him still the sound of jeers and curses. With longing heart He has listened for some expression of faith from His disciples. He has heard only the mournful words, “We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel.” How grateful then to the Saviour was the utterance of faith and love from the dying thief! While the leading Jews deny Him, and even the disciples doubt His divinity, the poor thief, upon the brink of eternity, calls Jesus Lord. Many were ready to call Him Lord when He wrought miracles, and after He had risen from the grave; but none acknowledged Him as He hung dying upon the cross save the penitent thief who was saved at the eleventh hour. . . .

I say unto thee today, Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise. Christ did not promise that the thief should be with Him in Paradise that day. He Himself did not go that day to Paradise. He slept in the tomb, and on the morning of the resurrection He said, “I am not yet ascended to My Father.” John 20:17. But on the day of the crucifixion, the day of apparent defeat and darkness, the promise was given. “Today” while dying upon the cross as a malefactor, Christ assures the poor sinner, Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.

—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 750, 751.

Jesus said to Mary, “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father.” When He closed His eyes in death upon the cross, the soul of Christ did not go at once to heaven, as many believe, or how could His words be true—“I am not yet ascended to my Father”? The spirit of Jesus slept in the tomb with His body, and did not wing its way to heaven, there to maintain a separate existence, and to look down upon the mourning disciples embalming the body from which it had taken flight. All that comprised the life and intelligence of Jesus remained with His body in the sepulcher; and when He came forth it was as a whole being; He did not have to summon His spirit from heaven. He had power to lay down His life and to take it up again.

—*Ellen G. White Comments, in The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1150.

The pitying Saviour stands right by your side to help you. He would send every angel out of glory while you are struggling to overcome sin, so that Satan cannot have the victory over you. Christ . . . took man’s human nature upon Him that He might come right down to man in the temptation wherewith man is beset. The pitiful Redeemer knows just how to help us in every one of our strivings.

—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 263.

Tuesday, November 22

## “To Depart and Be With Christ”

When the apostle Paul, through the revelation of Christ, was converted from a persecutor to a Christian, he declared that he was as one born out of due time. Henceforward Christ was all and in all to him. “For to me to live is Christ,” he declared. This is the most perfect interpretation in a few words, in all the Scriptures, of what it means to be a Christian. This is the whole truth of the gospel. Paul understood what many seem unable to comprehend. How intensely in earnest he was! His words show that his mind was centered in Christ, that his whole life was bound up with his Lord. Christ was the author, the support, and the source of his life.

—*Ellen G. White Comments, in The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 903.*

There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. 2 Timothy 4:8.

Paul kept ever in view the crown of life which was to be given to him, and not to him only, but also to all those who love Christ’s appearing. But it was victory through Jesus Christ that made the crown of life so desirable to him. Jesus would not have us ambitious to obtain reward, but ambitious to do God’s will because it is His will, irrespective of the reward we are to receive.

—*Lift Him Up, p. 343.*

All along the path that leads to death there are pains and penalties, there are sorrows and disappointments, there are warnings from God’s messengers not to go on, and God will make it hard for the heedless and the headstrong to destroy themselves. All the way up the steep path leading to eternal life are wellsprings of joy to refresh the weary. The true, strong joy of the soul begins when Christ is formed within, the hope of glory. If you now choose the path where God leads, and go forward where the voice of duty calls, the difficulties which Satan has magnified before you will disappear.

No path is safe, save that which grows clearer and firmer the farther it is pursued. The foot may sometimes slip upon the safest path. In order to walk without fear, you must know that your hand is firmly held by the hand of Christ. . . .

. . . Look at Paul; listen to his words sounding along the line to our time: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7, 8). Here is the battle shout of victory from Paul. What will be yours?

—*Selected Messages, book 2, p. 169.*

Wednesday, November 23

## Preaching to the Spirits in Prison

God granted [the antediluvians] one hundred and twenty years of probation, and during that time preached to them through Methuselah, Noah, and many others of His servants. Had they listened to the testimony of these faithful witnesses, had they repented and returned to their loyalty, God would not have destroyed them. . . .

“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” Christ was engaged in this warfare in Noah’s day. It was His voice that spoke to the inhabitants of the old world in messages of warning, reproof, and invitation. He gave the people a probation of one hundred and twenty years, in which they might have repented. But they chose the deceptions of Satan, and perished in the waters of the Flood.

—*Ellen G. White Comments, in The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1088.*

Sins that have not been repented of and forsaken will not be pardoned and blotted out of the books of record, but will stand to witness against the sinner in the day of God. He may have committed his evil deeds in the light of day or in the darkness of night; but they were open and manifest before Him with whom we have to do. Angels of God witnessed each sin and registered it in the unerring records. Sin may be concealed, denied, covered up from father, mother, wife, children, and associates; no one but the guilty actors may cherish the least suspicion of the wrong; but it is laid bare before the intelligences of heaven. The darkness of the darkest night, the secrecy of all deceptive arts, is not sufficient to veil one thought from the knowledge of the Eternal. God has an exact record of every unjust account and every unfair dealing. He is not deceived by appearances of piety. He makes no mistakes in His estimation of character. Men may be deceived by those who are corrupt in heart, but God pierces all disguises and reads the inner life. . . .

As the features of the countenance are reproduced with unerring accuracy on the polished plate of the artist, so the character is faithfully delineated in the books above. Yet how little solicitude is felt concerning that record which is to meet the gaze of heavenly beings. Could the veil which separates the visible from the invisible world be swept back, and the children of men behold an angel recording every word and deed, which they must meet again in the judgment, how many words that are daily uttered would remain unspoken, how many deeds would remain undone.

—*The Great Controversy, pp. 486, 487.*

Thursday, November 24

## The Souls Under the Altar

When the fifth seal was opened, John the Revelator in vision saw beneath the altar the company that were slain for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. After this came the scenes described in the eighteenth of Revelation, when those who are faithful and true are called out from Babylon [Revelation 18:1-5 quoted].

—**Ellen G. White Comments, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 968.**

God has always wrought for His people in their greatest extremity, when there seemed the least hope that ruin could be averted. The designs of wicked men, the enemies of the church, are subject to His power and overruling providence. He can move upon the hearts of statesmen; the wrath of the turbulent and disaffected, the haters of God, His truth, and His people can be turned aside, even as the rivers of water are turned, if He orders it thus. Prayer moves the arm of Omnipotence. He who marshals the stars in order in the heavens, whose word controls the waves of the great deep, the same infinite Creator will work in behalf of His people if they call upon Him in faith. He will restrain the forces of darkness until the warning is given to the world and all who will heed it are prepared for the conflict.

—***Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 452.**

The whole system of religious principles and doctrines, which should form the foundation and framework of social life, seems to be a tottering mass, ready to fall to ruin. The vilest of criminals, when thrown into prison for their offenses, are often made the recipients of gifts and attentions as if they had attained an enviable distinction. Great publicity is given to their character and crimes. The press publishes the revolting details of vice, thus initiating others into the practice of fraud, robbery, and murder; and Satan exults in the success of his hellish schemes. . . .

Courts of justice are corrupt. Rulers are actuated by desire for gain and love of sensual pleasure. Intemperance has beclouded the faculties of many so that Satan has almost complete control of them. Jurists are perverted, bribed, deluded. Drunkenness and revelry, passion, envy, dishonesty of every sort, are represented among those who administer the laws. “Justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.” Isaiah 59:14.

—***The Great Controversy*, pp. 585, 586.**

There are limits even to the forbearance of God. The boundary of His long-suffering may be reached, and then He will surely punish. And when He does take up the case of the presumptuous sinner, He will not cease till He has made a full end.

—**Ellen G. White Comments, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1166.**

Friday, November 25

## **For Further Reading**

*Lift Him Up*, “In the Father’s Arms,” p. 103;

*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, “Teachers as Examples of Christian Integrity,” p. 504.